2:Friedl E-5 (1955-1959)1963 EH1 Greece EH1
Vasilika

watch the plays, and together concentrate their attention for over an hour on exactly the same activity.

The Village Church

The affairs of the church in Vasilika are administered by the priest with the aid of a committee of four men. Committee members are selected for three-year terms by the bishop from a list sent by the priest. One of the members of the committee is the treasurer for the church. He makes the collections at services and generally supervises the church's funds. In Vasilika income for the church is derived from the Sunday collections, the sale of offerings of wheat and olive oil made on special feast days, the sale of candles, rent on church property such as the old school building and the community office (both of these buildings were put up by the church as an investment), and the sale of produce from some twenty church-owned *stremata*. The priest is now given a small salary by the national government, but one-quarter of the church's income must be returned to the national treasury as a partial contribution of the community to the priest's salary. The other expenses of the church include the salaries (eighty drachmas a month) paid to each of the chanters and to the sexton. In Vasilika, the latter office is held by a sixty-year-old woman who is often assisted in her duties by her grandchildren. The physical maintenance of the buildings is also a responsibility of the church committee, and in 1959 they arranged for an extensive renovation of the main church.

The description just given is that of the formal organization of church affairs. In Vasilika the priest himself has more than his share of influence on all decisions and, indeed, it was said that one of the committee members in 1956 never went to any meetings of the church committee (they are said to be held about four times a year). The priest is a native of Vasilika, in his sixties. He is a strong, vigorous, and imposing figure, somewhat taller than the average villager and with a personality, temper, and voice to match. As he chants the liturgy the priest's deep voice fills the church, so that the elegant cadences of the Greek Orthodox mass gain added beauty. Because the priest and his sons have arranged his patrimony well, the priest as a private landowner is one of the more prosperous men in the village and for that reason, as well as for his personal qualities, he commands considerable respect.

Under the leadership of the priest, church affairs can, on rare occasions, involve the entire male population of the village. At about one o'clock on a rainy Sunday afternoon in the fall of 1955, the church bell rang. The men and the boys of the village streamed down the hill into the *agbora*. There they stood in the heavy rain as the priest, in his flowing black robes, as usual, and holding the only umbrella in the gathering over himself, began an impassioned oration. Several men responded with equal eloquence and after about a half-hour of speeches, they disbanded. It seems that one of the shepherds, who had rented a church-owned small house, was refusing to pay the rent asked of him. He had

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been threatened with eviction but had not responded even to this. The priest had called the men of the community together to try to get backing for his decision to evict the man. The authority was granted him on that rainy Sunday, but the shepherd finally agreed to go part way toward meeting the demand and continued to live in the house.

Religious Feast Days

If the formal organization of church affairs involves village-wide action or concern only in times of crisis, certain feasts and ceremonies of the Greek Orthodox Church certainly provide a focus of interest for the entire village at regular intervals during the year. The most conspicuous of these is the sequence of events by which the villagers celebrate Easter. The Sunday before Lent begins is the particular day which starts the holiday observances in Vasilika. After church services, children ran about in the morning trying to throw powdered soot at each other and at unsuspecting adults. Later in the day, the children and unmarried men and women dressed in costumes in preparation for the arrival of the musicians—this time there were a clarinetist, a violinist, and the player of a *sanduri* (dulcimer). Some boys and girls dressed as animals and their trainers went around in groups trying to frighten the very small children or just laughing at their own antics. The young people dressed themselves as gypsies, and some of the boys put on women's clothes and walked around with mincing steps and female gestures, while some of the girls donned men's clothes and twirled false moustaches. Throughout the afternoon and early evening the musicians sat in the *aghora* and the young people and their elders danced in the space between the two coffeehouses, as virtually all the rest of the village population sat and watched. Some spectators sat at the coffeehouse tables drinking beer or soda; others brought chairs from home to sit along the walls of the houses near the *aghora.* Still others watched from second-story windows overlooking the area. All the spectators sat quietly and without expression. Those who danced paid the musicians and occasionally the watchers would proffer a glass of *ouzo* (anise liqueur) to the male dancers and to the musicians.

The dances themselves were the most commonly known traditional round dances of the Greek countryside: the *kalamatyanos, sirtos,* and *tsamikos,* danced in Vasilika by both men and women, but usually not at the same time. Men danced the *zembekikos* and the *khasapikos* as solos.

On this occasion, and on any other when musicians came to the village, the women of some of the more sophisticated families joined their male relatives sitting around the small coffeehouse tables.

In the evening, several families joined together for a meat-eating feast, after which bonfires were lit in different sections of the village; this time the adults joined in the carnival spirit of practical jokes and danced and sang in the security of their own neighborhoods until early morning. The next day is "Clean Monday." Many of the villagers visited Kifisokhori, which has a carnival

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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windows had been blocked with masonry and stones, and the church, thus barricaded and surrounded by an elaborate system of trenches, pill-boxes and barbed wire defences, transformed into a citadel. Here the greater part of the population had taken refuge while the militia, with a stiffening of gendarmerie, had fought off an assault on the village which raged for a night and a day on May 8th-9th, 1948. The fabric had suffered extensive damage from mortar and machine-gun fire, but the Communists had eventually been driven off. Earlier, the village had suffered grievously at the hands of the Germans. Though the church had been spared, the school and a large proportion of the houses had been destroyed. The school was now flourishing in a large nissen hut: formerly it had been housed in the nave of the church.

On Sunday morning there was great scrubbing and polishing of muddy boots, and at half-past eight I ventured forth, looking as spruce as three weeks of sleeping in my clothes would permit, in company with the *proedros*. The latter was anxious not to be too early at church, and, since the second bell had not yet sounded, we went first to inspect the new school. After smoking a cigarette with the *didaskalos* we proceeded to the church at the third bell, followed by all the children of the village. When the liturgy was ended the president climbed with great dignity to the top of one of the pill-boxes and made an impassioned oration welcoming the representative of Greece's great and traditional ally to their gallant and Christ-loving village, and dwelling at some length on the ties which, despite the infernal machinations of the Accursed of God, would surely bind together for all ages the Hellenic and British nations. The said representative thereupon made a brief, but it is to be hoped fitting, reply to this masterpiece of presidential rhetoric, and the whole company drifted away in high good humour to sip cognac and discuss the latest news which had arrived from Kozani.

After a visit to the family of a young theologian from Salonica I went to feast, first with the president and then—at the dictates of charity rather than of appetite—with the parish priest also. The influence of the Kozani seminary had made itself felt in this village, and the catechetical school was in full swing as I passed the new school-house on my way to the parsonage. There the wine that makes glad the heart of man flowed freely, and it was a drowsy traveller who rode across the hills to the neighbouring village of Kivotos later that afternoon. Communications having proved unreliable, I was constrained to accept the hospitality of one of the churchwardens. Shortly before noon the

5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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793 while in many churches and halls there are regular sermons at other
796 times during the week.

In the country dioceses, owing to the shortage of qualified preachers, sermons are still all too rarely to be heard outside the cathedral towns. The bishop and the diocesan preacher, with such other assistants as can be mustered from local resources, will visit one or two villages every Sunday, but in a diocese of perhaps 100 scattered communities it may well be that months will pass without the majority of the people having the opportunity to hear a sermon. I remember one Macedonian 'saint', who had taken advantage of the cessation of fighting in his diocese from the spring of 1949 onwards to undertake an intensive preaching campaign, telling me that in some villages it was more than ten years since a sermon had last been heard.

793 An energetic *hierokeryx* will often perform wonders; take for instance
796 this typical week-end itinerary of a lay theologian, a member of Zoë,
484 who used to be stationed at Kozani; on Saturday afternoon by army truck to Amyntaion (a distance of about fifty-five kilometres) and thence to the village of Lechovo, an hour's journey to the westward towards Kastoria. Here he gives an evening address in the church, the greater part of the community present. On Sunday morning a sermon at the liturgy is followed by an address to the young men and women. After a hurried meal he sets off on foot to the neighbouring village of Skydro for an address, not this time in the church but in the square. Thence he climbs to the village of Nymphaion, high on the mountain-side, for two further addresses before nightfall—one in church, the other, for the young people, in the school. On Monday morning he proceeds by mule to Aetos and thence to Amyntaion and Kozani. The assistant *hierokeryx* of the diocese will in the meantime have set out for the *comopolis* of Servia to preach, from a cart standing in the midst of the square, to the crowds who have gathered there for the weekly market.

793 The Greek *hierokeryx* can in general assume in his hearers a knowledge
796 of the fundamentals of the Christian faith such as can no longer be
● 537 taken for granted in England, at any rate. He and they will speak a common language—even though many have forgotten the reality that
[785] lies behind the familiar phrases. The outward tokens of a Christian society have still survived to a remarkable degree—the fasts of the Church's year, for instance, are still observed as a matter of course by multitudes who would make no claim to piety above the average. In

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these circumstances it is understandable that contemporary preaching should (to accept the distinction now current in reforming circles) be practical rather than theoretical: should deal less with doctrine than with conduct.

Father Eusebius was wont to insist on the importance of ending every sermon with a clear and distinct conclusion, to bring home the particular moral and spiritual truth with which the preacher had been dealing to the conscience of his hearers, as well as on the need for preaching in a style suited to their condition. His example has been salutary, and in reforming circles to-day one never hears the type of homily still cultivated by a few eccentric saints who bewilder their silly sheep with florid discourses framed in the ornate periods of Psellos or Anna Comnena. I well recall a certain *hierokeryx*, a lovable if idiorrhythmic character, who modelled his festal homilies on the funeral orations of Bossuet (a much-thumbed volume that accompanied him everywhere). These triumphs of rhetoric, which must have left the Epirote peasantry groping in vain for any clear and distinct practical conclusion, would be composed months before the date of their delivery and constantly reworked and polished until they reached the requisite height of literary perfection. Such artistry would be frowned upon in the religious societies.

The work of the preacher is supplemented by that of the confessor. Although the mystery of confession has in practice fallen into sad neglect, owing to the shortage of qualified *pneumatikoi*, there has been no more effective instrument for the reawakening of the Greek Church; none that is more highly prized in reforming circles to-day. While east and west are at one as to the fundamental nature of this 'mystery', there is a certain difference of emphasis. Amongst the Greeks the element of 'ghostly counsel and advice' is far more prominent than is commonly the case amongst western Christians. So marked is this difference of emphasis that Dr. Covel—who is as immoderate in his assaults upon the Romish doctrine of auricular confession as upon any other of the 'seven pretended sacraments'—is yet moved to applaud the Greek practice as a pious and laudable institution: such a confession, he remarks, or rather (lest there should be any misunderstanding) "serious Conference or Discourse as this with a Ghostly Father, or discreet Minister, is justly observed and commended by our own Church".

In these circumstances it is natural that considerably more importance should be attached to the personal character and qualifications of the

10: Lee E,I-4,5 (no date) 1953
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of them. Like the eyes, they lead astray not through making false promises, but by engendering love. Speech is of extreme importance to the Greeks, since it establishes and fosters the all-important personal relationships. Almost everyone creates songs; love songs at the village festival, dirges, lullabies, songs of the way of life, songs of work, songs of one's village and of nature. It is important to find the graphic word in the most ordinary speech, and to turn a spicy phrase. Utterance will take the form of a small oration without creating self-consciousness; an answer is often incisive repartee. There are orations in the coffee house, and wherever a few people gather together. Even learned papers or scientific journals, when not under foreign influence, are often couched in oratory. *Couvenda*, conversation, is a recognized form of "passing the time", of entertainment, perhaps on a par with *syryani*. *Couvenda* is rarely desultory, or the mere exchange of information. It is usually contrapuntal virtuosity, incisive, combative, loud; and loudness is such a familiar quality of conversation that radios are turned on much too loud for the ears of foreigners. A statement or a question is countered by a challenging question. Tact and gentleness have no part here, insults are hurled, attacks are made, within the appropriate limits. A discussion is a battle of personal opinion, and its end is neither to reach the truth nor to reach a conclusion; its end is sheer enjoyment of vigorous speech.

The hair is a focus of erotic attraction. In the folk songs there is often the picture of a girl letting her hair down as a ladder hung for her lover. For the man, the moustache is a symbol of his manhood and attractiveness. The beard is not important, and in a folk song, a priest's wife calls her husband a bearded goat. A man without face hair is called a *Spanos*, and is a figure of derision in the folklore, and sometimes of fear.

Beyond the features of the head, very little of the body is mentioned in the personal folk songs. Genital organs must never be mentioned, and many women know no names for them. Out of over 400 love couplets analysed, only one mentions the breast, "your breast is like Paradise". Formally, as a general division of the body—the chest—the breast is named in the same way for men and women and the term can be used freely. In its form of a female breast it must not be mentioned, as none of the sexual areas are mentioned. Its functional term, however, the nursing-breast, *vyzi*, is commonly used without embarrassment and when a mother is nursing, there is no embarrassment about exposing the breast for suckling.

The sense of smell is extremely important to the Greeks. In the personal folk poems, there is much mention of sweet-smelling flowers, herbs, trees: "musk and cinnamon, a beautiful girl she is" says a rhyming game. An unexpected guest will be offered a "smell" of whatever the housewife is cooking, or the family is eating. And it